

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 27, 2014

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. SW
Washington, D.C. 20536

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Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I write to invite you to visit Alaska this summer or fall to observe first-hand the unique telecommunications circumstances facing Alaska Native and rural communities within the state. I encourage you and your key FCC staff to visit both rural and urban Alaska. This will advance your understanding of the complexity of the telecommunications issues in our state and will aid your future decision making.

As you know, Alaska faces many obstacles when it comes to providing basic and advanced telecommunication services to the entire state. However, there are companies and telecom co-ops that are successfully deploying these services in areas of Alaska, which are traditionally underserved areas.

Possible itinerary options would be to visit rural regions in the Bering Straits, the Northwest Arctic, and the Aleutian Chain where you can observe first-hand the unique challenges of building a middle mile network amidst unique and difficult landscapes, climates, and distances. While here you would also have the opportunity to tour regional and village health facilities to observe the practical benefits and real cost savings of telemedicine, as well as rural schools utilizing distant education through the E-Rate program. In addition to visiting rural Alaska, I encourage you to be available for meetings and a public listening session in Anchorage where you will hear a broad range of Alaskan telecom issues.

I truly appreciate your engagement on issues of importance to Alaska and look forward to the opportunity to demonstrate how technology is deployed in our state.

Sincerely,

Mark Begich
United States Senator